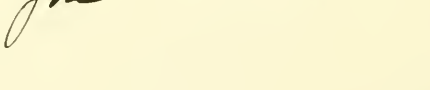
WESTMINSTER
VERSES &c.
JOHN SARGEAUNT
WITH A MEMOIR
BY THE
REV. Dr. JAMES GOW

AA001 432 078 2
UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

FOUR HUNDRED COPIES OF THIS
BOOK HAVE BEEN PRINTED OF WHICH
THIS IS NUMBER 245

WESTMINSTER VERSES



WESTMINSTER VERSES

BY JOHN SARGEAUNT

WITH A MEMOIR BY THE
REV. DR JAMES GOW

T. FISHER UNWIN LTD
LONDON ADELPHI TERRACE

First published in 1922

Some of these Verses have appeared in The Nation, *and thanks are due to the Editor for leave to reprint. Some others have appeared in* The Elizabethan.

All rights reserved

TO A——

MAN cannot choose to love the sun,
He loves it of his being's need;
Come else what will, that shines his one
Coeval heed.

Lucina ere we speak or think
We worship with scarce conscious gaze;
For light, when down the stream we sink,
Still the soul prays.

Nor could I choose to give to thee
Whatever kindles in my heart;
'Twas thine already as held in fee,
And mine no part.

CONTENTS

To A—	page 7
Memoir	11
Umbraculum	33
The Loving Cup at Election Dinner	35
An Epitaph in the Cloisters	37
Little Dean's Yard	39
Itaque quietus est, 1914	40
Quos aequus amavit, 1918	41
Monitor Ostii	42
The Plane Tree	46
If there were a Ball up School	48
To the Fountain in Little Cloisters	53
The Piewoman	55
Sanctuary	57
Translation and a Comment	58
In the Metre of an old Dirge	59
For a Musician	60
From Callimachus	62
From the Greek	63
After Horace	64
After Horace	65
Mr Podger comes to the Play	66
The Bells	77
Latin Galliambics	83

A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR

JOHN SARGEAUNT, whom we may henceforth more conveniently designate by his initials J. S., was the eldest son of John Barneby Sargeaunt, one of H.M. Revising Barristers and a member of the Midland Circuit. He was born on August 12, 1857, at Irthlingborough, a large village near Higham Ferrars, in Northamptonshire, but his parents soon afterwards removed to the neighbouring village of Stanwick, where his grandfather had lately been rector, and here J. S. spent his boyhood and some part of his youth.

Stanwick lies on the eastern fringe of that district of Northamptonshire which is famous for the manufacture of boots and shoes, and though there is no factory in Stanwick itself, most of the inhabitants are engaged in the local industry and such expressions as 'she belongs a handsewn man' form part of the local dialect. It is a friendly place. The writer, who took the clerical duty in the summer of 1908, remembers that one Sunday morning no less than eleven married couples, each with a child, trooped into church and asked for the baptismal service. Each couple had agreed to stand sponsors for the child of another couple and though there was some confusion and giggling, there was a neighbourliness about the ceremony which was very pleasing. Amid such people, kindly, talkative and keenly inter-

ested in politics, J. S. was brought up, and he never lost touch with them.

It is said that he could read when he was two years old, but there were distractions in the shape of a garden and a pony, which prevented him from becoming too much of a bookworm. The pony was perhaps the ultimate cause of a fund of knowledge which in later life was a marked characteristic of J. S., for there are many great houses within an easy ride of Stanwick, and great houses suggest a curiosity about great families. At any rate J. S. was always interested in pedigrees, especially such as were somehow connected with Northamptonshire. I once told him that his ape-like ancestor, 'probably arboreal,' must have lived up a genealogical tree, but he was not to be chaffed out of his predilection. When he started to recite a pedigree, his face grew serious and he told us who married whom and who she was with as much solemnity as if he was reading the lessons in church. The schoolmaster is none the worse for a little noticeable oddity, and this fondness for pedigrees was J. S.'s harmless eccentricity.

In 1867 the family removed to Bedford in order to take advantage of the educational endowments of the Harpur Trust, and J. S. was entered as a day boy at the grammar school, though the cottage at Stanwick was

still retained as a holiday resort. A boy with so good a memory as J. S. had, was bound to be a remarkable pupil, and he made great progress in all subjects except mathematics, which he declined to learn. He rose to be head of the school, was a member of the cricket eleven and a conspicuous performer in the mile race and the high jump. His energy in the cricket field is illustrated by the fact that when he and R. Pym, afterwards Bishop of Bombay, ran for the same catch, they collided so violently that both were carried insensible to the pavilion.

On Saints' days and other holidays he was able to indulge his hobbies. The only one of them which he seems to have afterwards forsaken is fishing, for which his mother's family, the Drakes, had a hereditary aptitude. Botany, his taste for which was derived from his mother, and poetry occupied most of his time. His brother, the Rev. W. D. Sargeaunt, reports of him as follows: 'The pony cart at Bedford helped him and his brother to make wide circuits to see the country and visit relations. He would often leave the pony to his brother or sister while he dived into a wood or warren after a flower he read was there to be found. When he drove the pony cart, his fellow occupants were always a little afraid, for they knew that his mind was often on some passage in Shakespeare, Tennyson or

Browning as spasmodically he would make known. He was a great devourer of the novel from Richardson to Mrs Humphrey Ward. Perhaps his favourites were Jane Austen, Anthony Trollope and Dickens. The Annual Register was often in his hand, and he would delight his family with a tit-bit such as that of the man who falling from the coach's top got entangled in the wheel, "which much impeded the course of the coach." At our little house on the outskirts of Bedford he contrived a small green house. There he might be seen worshipping a flower or feeding a pet toad with the worms that came from his potting mould. He began speaking in the Debating Society at Bedford, which he must have helped to found. He was always delightful.' The child was indeed the father to the man not only in his tastes but in his genial temperament, and it is not without significance that his contemporaries and even his Headmaster, Mr J. S. Phillpotts, still remember him as 'Jack' Sargeaunt.

It should be added that his home life was especially favourable to the development of his natural gifts. His mother, as already stated, introduced him to botany and must have encouraged him in poetry and recitation, for it is recorded that the whole family once gave an evening's entertainment of music and recitation and drama, in

which J. S. took a prominent part. He did not, however, contribute to the music; for he always professed a great dislike for music which he called noise, and of which he said that it had charms to soothe the savage but not the civilized breast. His ear for rhythm was very quick and delicate, as is well shewn in the galliambic translation of *Auld Robin Gray* printed in this volume.

J. S. left Bedford in 1876 and went in the following October to University College, Oxford, with an open College scholarship and a leaving scholarship from school. The Master of University at that time was Dr Bradley, afterwards Dean of Westminster, and the classical tutor was S. H. Butcher, whom Bradley had imported from Trinity College, Cambridge. Not much is now to be known of J. S.'s college life. Many of his contemporaries are dead and the rest of them are not rich in memories of him. He did not speak much of his College days and may have been of rather straitened means, for it is said of him that he did not take part in College games, though he certainly once won the high jump at the College Sports. His main exercise was walking with friends. He took a First Class in Mods. in 1878 and a Second in Greats in 1880. His failure to take a first in Greats, though he was good at history, was probably due to his devotion to the Union, where he was a frequent

speaker and ultimately president in October 1880. His style as a speaker is said to have been rather rough at first, but he gradually improved and became both eloquent and cogent, his matter being always carefully prepared.

On leaving Oxford J. S. went as a master to Inverness College, then under the headmastership of Mr C.W. Bourne, who later came to London as Headmaster of King's College School and afterwards took holy orders. Mr Bourne remembers J. S. as a very versatile person in many respects: he was a chess player, a gardener and an amateur actor. It was thanks to this last gift of his that the school earned a considerable reputation for amateur acting, and it is remembered that he made a great impression by his acting in *The Porter's Knot*. He was at the same time a most loyal and helpful colleague whom his Headmaster consulted on many points of school management, on which his advice was always definite and clearly expressed. Inverness College, however, was concerned mainly with the Army Examinations and did not afford much scope for a classical scholar. In 1885 therefore J. S., though he liked Inverness and the society that he found there, left with the hearty good wishes of Mr Bourne to take the classical Sixth Form work at Felsted School, Essex. One of his colleagues there, the Rev. E. Jepp, writes of him as follows:

'In the Common Room he was at home and more or less dominant at once. We learnt spasmodically at least to speak good English; to this day we think of Sargeaunt when we find ourselves about to say "the letter is being written," and we tremble and refrain. We learnt that popery and music are naught and that Dr Johnson is the sage of sages. In one thing we were indocile. Our conservatism stood as a wall against his political harangues, and we had one man who could even answer him effectually. That he disliked, but what made him gnash his teeth was any attempt of a weakling colleague to back him up. When you have lived with him in your own home, and in his, travelled with him, mountaineered with him, gardened, botanized, fungus-hunted with him, day in day out, in the home life and in life abroad, then you know what few who knew him know, and you realize that the wound of his loss will never heal.' J. S. liked Felsted too and wrote a history of the school, but on a change in the headmastership he resigned his post, and at the recommendation of Dean Bradley, who had been Master of his College at Oxford, Dr Rutherford offered him an engagement and he entered on his work at Westminster in January, 1890.

For a man of J. S.'s proclivities Westminster School has many charms, and he fell in love with it. Its buildings

are in some respects splendid, its customs retain in shadow, if not always in substance, the organization that it had in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and its historical and literary associations especially in the 17th and 18th centuries are unequalled by any other school in the country. The Sixth Form, which was assigned to J.S., is not the highest form on the classical side, for Dr Busby in the 17th century had had a Seventh Form and Dr Rutherford revived the name for his highest form. J.S., however, received boys who had already been well drilled in grammar and metre and elementary composition and were ready to take a larger interest in literature and to see the dependence of modern prose and poetry on classical models and classical suggestions. The room which he occupied, though modern, was the best room in the place and looked out on College on the south and Little Dean's Yard on the west. One door from it opened on the ancient dorter of the monks, which had until recently been the sole schoolroom in which every famous Westminster had had his education. Memories of Ben Johnson, Hakluyt, George Herbert, Cowley, Christopher Wren, Dryden, Locke, Prior, Gibbon and Cowper are evoked by this hall. Impey and Warren Hastings, Lord William Bentinck and a host more of soldiers and statesmen, bishops and judges have here thumbed their

books and been 'handed' for their blunders. Maundy money, the gift of Queen Elizabeth, is still awarded as a prize for epigrams; the Dean of Christ Church and the Master of Trinity still visit the school annually to select scholars for their respective Colleges; a Latin play is still given at Christmas; Election dinner with its flow of epigrams at dessert is still held in College Hall; *mon. os.* still goes round the school to announce the hour and stands on the bulkhead at the foot of the steps to see the school dismissed. J. S. in fact found a hundred things to delight and interest him and to stimulate his imagination. Nor would he forget that his favourite, Miss Austen, had sent Mr Robert Ferrars and Mr Henry Crawford to school at Westminster when they were boys, though they did not grow up to do much credit to their school. Moreover, Westminster is in London and J. S. had not lived in London before. Already at Felsted, as we have seen, he was a confirmed Johnsonian, and the master had said that he who is tired of London is tired of life. J. S. was prepared to take full advantage of the opportunities. He found a pleasant lodging at 11 Vincent Square, where he looked out on the school cricket ground which had once been part of Tothill Fields. He joined the National Liberal Club but afterwards exchanged it for the Reform. He wrote reviews

and gradually became known in literary circles. He was elected a member of the Johnson Club, was an original member of the Pepys Club, and finally in 1917 was elected a member of the Literary Society. About 1908 his means enabled him to buy two acres of ground and to build a little rough-cast house near the village of Fairwarp about four miles to the north of Uckfield, and here he laid out a garden and indulged in his love of botany and horticulture. This house he called 'Arnolds' because he intended to leave it, as indeed he did, to his friend and favourite pupil, Arnold Willett. His time at Westminster was full of literary activities. Besides many little editions of classical books he produced some works of a larger scope, of which *The Annals of Westminster School* and a complete edition of Dryden's Poems are the chief. At Christmas 1918 J. S., after twenty-nine years of devoted service resigned his office at Westminster and retired with a pension to his garden at Fairwarp. His departure was signalized by a great display of gratitude and affection from past and present pupils; he was entertained at dinner and was presented with two silver cups, one of which he has bequeathed to the school. It seemed likely when he retired that he would attain exactly that ideal of old age for which Horace prayed to Apollo:

Frui paratis et valido mihi,
Latoe, dones et precor integra
Cum mente nec turpem senectam
Degere nec cithara carentem.

J. S. had an income sufficient for his modest wants. He was strong enough to dig, his mind was alert, he had no sign of disabling illness, and he had ample leisure for reading and writing poetry. These halcyon days, however, were to last little more than three years. They were full of interest for him. He was often employed by the Board of Education as an extra inspector of Secondary Schools; he often came to London to attend the dinners of his literary societies; he stayed at the Reform Club and frequently played bridge there, and assisted the library committee, of which he was a member. At home he was a member of the Governing Body of Brighton College and of the Rural District Council. His leisure was occupied with reviews for the *Athenæum* or *The Times Literary Supplement*, with a translation of the *Odyssey* into English hexameters, with a history of Bedford School, and a book on the trees, plants and shrubs of Virgil.

He had made for Mr Fisher Unwin that selection of his poems which is here presented to the reader, and the first batch of proofs of this book reached him on the

morning of March 11th, 1922. He tore off the cover and put the proofs aside for correction, but that same afternoon he was seized with an internal pain which soon became torture, and he had to take a long and cruel journey to a nursing home in Brighton. An operation was performed on him at ten o'clock that night. In a few days another operation became necessary, but it was in vain, and on Monday, March 20th, he died. He lies buried in the cemetery at Brighton.

Enough has been said above to show that J. S. was a man of exceptional learning in many fields, of great ability and industry. There is no occasion here to enumerate or criticize his literary works, nor indeed if this were a prefatory appreciation of his poems would it be quite tactful to lay stress on the learning and industry of their author. But this little memoir is a tribute of affection and regret prepared by one old friend on behalf of hundreds of other old friends, in whom his learning and industry first attracted attention and laid the foundation of that affection with which they soon came to regard him. For here was obviously a sincere man, believing what he preached, who asked no boy to do what he was not doing himself, namely, learning day by day, trying to get nearer the truth and trying to improve his own skill. A boy who sees a grown man doing this feels an increase of his self-respect, binds himself apprentice

to his teacher, imitates him, and if the man is a gentleman, as J. S. was, loves as well as admires him. Most of J. S.'s friends were acquired in this way, for nearly five hundred boys passed through his hands while he was taking the Sixth Form at Westminster, and to most of them he has been a permanent influence.

Some pages may therefore be fitly devoted to an account of J. S. in his class-room, the more so because, though he would have been conspicuous in any calling, he chose to distinguish himself in the humble calling of a schoolmaster. It is only rarely that an assistant master in a large school receives his due meed of public recognition. His work, like that of an oarsman in an eight, contributes to the general progress and is not especially recognized, and the success, if any, is attributed to the school as a whole and looted by the headmaster. Where recognition is plainly due, we are of Dr Johnson's opinion that it ought to be proclaimed.

An interesting and very exact description of J. S. as he appeared to the boys in Little Dean's Yard is given in an obituary notice which was contributed to *The Times* by Mr Stephen McKenna: 'We knew him first by sight, as a skeleton of a man with dark hair and grey-blue eyes, a skin like wrinkled parchment, and a deep voice; a man who stood bent like a jointed foot-rule, with his cap askew. From his thinness and his cough we

judged that he was delicate; we heard of insomnia and gout; but when we first aspired to Sixth Form rank we thought only of Sargeaunt as a man who did not insist on work, who imposed no punishments, and who contrived withal to make life entertaining for his Form.' He taught divinity, classics and English, including history. In religion he was orthodox enough to go sometimes to church both in London and in the country, and he always took part in the school communions at the beginning and end of term. But his divinity teaching was not likely to be common-place and sometimes provoked remonstrances from unusually pious parents. An evangelical clergyman once complained to me that the divinity teaching in Westminster was lax and disrespectful, but the example he cited was merely that J. S. had called Ezekiel a fanatic. I had no other complaint myself, but J. S. once or twice told me of letters that he had received objecting to statements that he was reported to have made. Divinity, however, occupied only a small space in the week's work, and J. S's special powers as a teacher were exhibited on other subjects.

His method, if the paradox may be allowed, was to be deliberately unmethodical. An old pupil of his whom I questioned on the subject said: 'We might begin with some lines of Virgil, but at the end of the hour we might be talking about Tennyson or Northamptonshire.' How

the transition came about may be easily guessed from an instance which is not wholly imaginary. J. S. once edited a small school edition of the first book of *Horace's Odes*. In the 13th Ode of this book at lines 11 and 12 occur the following words:

. . . sive puer furens
impressit memorem dente labris notam.

The passage presents no difficulty, but J. S. appended this note, 'Rosa Dartle.' One can easily imagine J. S. walking round his room and asking successive boys who was Rosa Dartle? Who bit her in the cheek? In what book do these characters occur? What! not read *Copperfield?* What Dickens have you read?—and so on until ultimately he might be induced to recite a discourse of Sarah Gamp or Mr Micawber. For J.S. had an extraordinary fund of quotations ranging from Shakespeare and Milton down to writers of our own day. 'We too,' writes Mr McKenna, 'must make all knowledge our province, if only to catch him out. Did any one ever succeed in this project, as hopeless as the first? Did any one ever seriously try?' One of my correspondents, Mr J. C. Gow, however, relates with some triumph that he achieved this exploit. J. S. quoted the first two lines of Wordsworth's 'Poor Susan' in the form,

At the corner of Wood Street when daylight appears
There's a thrush that sings loudly, it has sung there for years.

The boy ventured the correction 'has sung for three years.' J. S. was at first incredulous but on referring to the *Golden Treasury* found that the boy was right. He then said that any one but Wordsworth would have written the words as he quoted them and proceeded to discuss why Wordsworth insisted on three years. 'It was this and similar talks,' says J. C. G., 'which went to make up his method of teaching us, it was table talk rather than teaching in the ordinary school sense of the word. He never relied on hot-house methods or forcing; the seed would grow in its own time, and in my own case I know very well that talks with J. S. urged me to read and to try and appreciate the English poets whom he knew so well.'

The importance which J. S. attached to the *Golden Treasury* and the constant use he made of it are well brought out by another correspondent, Mr D. M. Low, who writes: 'J. S. discovered before I had been long in his form that I had not a *Golden Treasury*. "Then pawn your boots," he said, "and get one. I would rather you came up School without your boots than without your *Golden Treasury*." His words were humorous, but his face and the thought behind it were absolutely serious. For it really was his chief lesson that there were certain things, treasures of literature and history, that must be had at all cost if the mind was to be alert—

alive was his word—and nourished, and it was a serious thing to be without the means to this end.' The same correspondent remembers that J. S. was rather indifferent to the mere routine of teaching, i.e., to the hearing of repetition, looking over papers, correcting compositions & the like, and that 'he once actually said, "a Sixth Form master has no business with a time table"; but if anyone supposes that he was indifferent to more serious things he should have heard J. S. speaking to Ashburnham when there had been a theft in the house. His failings were outweighed by the debt we owed him for the kindling of many enthusiasms. I always think with satisfaction of a somewhat idle Election Term in the Sixth of which the memory gives me still greater satisfaction. It was from that time that my interest in literature became passionate. Mine was a common fate.'

Very often when I asked J. S. about the progress of a boy in his form, he would reply 'he has a mind' or 'he has no mind,' as the case might be. A boy who answered to the latter description was once induced by his literary researches to ask J.S., 'Please, sir, what is a peataster,' meaning a poetaster. This trivial anecdote, which might have been relegated to a footnote, will serve in Milton's phrase, 'to interpose a little ease' in the melancholy recital of regrets for a lost friend and master. Another pupil, Mr J. Spedan Lewis, who belongs to

J. S.'s middle period at the school and did not proceed to the University but who went straight from school into business, bears testimony of a kind similar to those quoted above, but peculiarly valuable as showing that J. S.'s influence was superior to the distractions of commercial life. 'What you got in Sargeaunt's' he says, 'was a minimum of particular teaching and a maximum of general education. The great sanity for which mainly he loved Dr Johnson was in him, and it was with the intelligence of the boys and with their character, that he concerned himself principally, while as to their excellence as examinees he gave only such attention and effort as the system of the times seemed to him to make necessary. In an entirely matter of course fashion and without ever mentioning anything of the sort he took it for granted that the winning of formal distinctions, the making of money and so on are only secondary things and should be indeed to no small extent merely automatic incidentals, and that what really matters in life is the developing and maintaining to the utmost the ability to enjoy one's own part and lot in things that are truly beautiful and interesting and the achieving of a good measure of right exertion in one way or another. So his teaching was concerned with the spirit and essence, rather than with the letter and with the externals of the subject, and his tendency in dealing with

boys was strongly towards leaving them to develop for themselves, if they could, genuine impulses of their own to diligence and punctuality and so on, the way, in fact, of a gardener, as he was, with plants, disregarding the more mechanical methods of the quasi examiner. He was profoundly and most undemonstratively in earnest about the great things of life and you came to feel it.'

An eloquent tribute to his memory appeared in the school magazine, *The Elizabethan*, for April, 1922. It is impossible to quote it in full without repeating many details which have been given above in some other form, but the concluding paragraph gives utterance to the feelings of all Old Westminsters who knew J. S. 'It is hard to express what Westminster must be fain to express in this day of loss. Very many salute in J. S. the kindliest, the wisest, the most potent individual influence of their lives. One of the most remarkable teachers and counsellors of this or any school has passed. We have parted from a great scholar, a great teacher, and beyond all a great gentleman.'

As most of the poems in this volume were suggested by Westminster it is natural that the greater part of this memoir should be devoted to a description of J. S. as he appeared in the place which he loved most and in which he spent most of his time.

But J. S. had other interests outside the school of which his colleagues knew little except by hearsay. The chief of these were concerned with the Reform, the Johnson and the Pepys Clubs. Of the first of these nothing need be said here, but the latter two were literary coteries in which J. S. was very prominent. A fellow-member of both clubs and an old friend, Mr George Whale, gives the following account of J. S.'s activity in their affairs: 'Sargeaunt, eminently clubbable, loved literary dining societies. Many of my recollections of him are connected with the Pepys Club, of which we were both members from its foundation in 1903. He spoke at its last dinner in his lifetime (February 8, 1922) and proposing the health of the guests, he wittily compared some of them to certain characters in fiction, especially in the novels of Jane Austen, which indeed were always among his favourite books. But J.S. is for me specially associated with the Johnson Club. On and since 13th of December, 1884, the centenary of Johnson's death, that club had met, as it still meets, once every three months. By the kindness of Mr Cecil Harmsworth, M.P., it has met of late years in the Johnson House, Gough Square, Fleet Street. In 1899, and again in 1920, J.S. and I had jointly edited two published volumes of Johnson Club papers read by members at the suppers of that club. We were both

fairly regular attendants at its meetings. He was, I think, seen at his best in the informal, impromptu discussions which followed on the reading of the papers at our club meetings. He knew his Boswell, and the literature of Johnson's time, more intimately than even most of the members of the club. Out of a powerful and copious memory he would there pour forth quotations and anecdotes of Johnsonian and earlier and later times. In temper equable, in speech quietly humorous, correct, of course, and fluent, but neither formal nor verbose, plain and candid, but not with brutal candour, learned, but without a taint of the Sir Oracle, or of the prig, or of King Cambyses' vein, or of the falsehood of extremes. J. S. truly adorned the club and added to the happiness of the members and their guests. I look back upon its meetings in the attic where the Dictionary was compiled by Johnson himself, as some of the happiest of my days. Amongst their chief pleasures were the presence and the talk of my own familiar friend, whom none knew but to like, and none knew well but to love.'

J. S. left Westminster in December, 1918. He retired partly because he was then over sixty-one years of age, but chiefly, as he told a friend, because the subjects which then occupied his mind, namely, the syllabation of English and quantitative metre in English and the

theory and practice of Mr Robert Bridges, were over the heads of his boys, and he feared that his talk puzzled and wearied them. His opinions on these topics are reflected in a translation of the *Odyssey* into English hexameters which he left complete before his death, but for which in these days of expensive printing he hardly attempted or hoped to find a publisher. Some day perhaps the pious offices of his friends will give this translation to the world together with some other compositions of his which merit preservation; but the pieces included in the present volume are of his own selection, and it did not seem right to interfere with his choice.

His old friend, Mr T. Fisher Unwin, founder of the Johnson Club, had long since promised to publish this little book, but J.S. delayed to send in the MS. till February of this year. Writing to Mr J. Spedan Lewis on March 2nd, he said: 'A little volume of poems intituled *Westminster Verses* goes even now to the press. The price will no more than cover the cost. However, the writer thought that if he waited, death perhaps would not.' He was at the time apparently hale and hearty, but in less than three weeks death overtook him.

JAMES GOW.

WESTMINSTER VERSES

UMBRACULUM

OUTSIDE along the roaring street
Go clanking wheels and tramping feet,
And morn and eve still tow'rd the sun
The emulous race for wealth is run.
And some men other cares invite;
With sword or gown they 'd climb the height,
Or vers'd in council and debate
Explore the future of the state;
Or there they toil where Wolsey's pride
Set Ebor's name by Thames's tide,
And govern by the lightning word
Land whereof Wolsey never heard,
Or with the driven quill control
The ways of man from pole to pole.
Praise for whomever heat and dust
Lead to the mansions of the just;
But here, enscons'd by Henry's wall,
We catch, as faintly Mammon's call,
So faintly whatsoever cries
Summon through turmoil to the skies.

The storied fane that soars between
Gives other joy and other teen,
Teen that for passion's purge inures,
Joy that invincible endures.
  Then passing by, oh busy throng,
The bower of science, love, and song
Leave to the mild Parnassian maid
Such meditation in the shade
As Milton's, when from Petty France
He fled the Town's ignoble dance
To foster in a lonely mood
The mind's imperial plenitude.

THE LOVING CUP AT ELECTION DINNER

Spoken by a King's Scholar

THIS in remembrance. Thus you stand
Brothers, and pass from hand to hand
The cup that from the Ganges came,
The cup where Hastings grav'd his name,
Sped where their waves two oceans roll,
Pledge of an unforgetting soul.

This in remembrance. Boys once more
Here on the worn familiar floor,
Here by Eliza's chestnut board
Whence Philip's cannon vainly roar'd,
As memory spans the arch of years
You wake old joys, hopes, troubles, fears.

This in remembrance. Great the throng,
Princes in statecraft, arms, and song,
Whose ghosts descending from the height
Hover about yon louver's light:
Though earth lie heavy on heart and head,
We can not count them with the dead.

In foresight this, that us whose age
Now opens first on manhood's page,
Through all the varying course of years
With 'Floreat' echoing in our ears
May tread the path our father's trod,
Servants of England and of God.

AN EPITAPH IN THE CLOISTERS

JANE LISTER

Dear childe

COUNT the long æons—nay, who could?—
Since man forsook four-footed gait
And dug the plain and fell'd the wood
And changed the herd into the state,
Then tell the years—too well you can—
That make the lot of several man.

But the long ages of our kind,
Like the brief span of every one,
What are they by the unfetter'd mind
That was before our daylight shone
And shall be when the dusty frame
Is thither scatter'd whence it came?

Dear child, nor dearer when intent
On prattle at your mother's knee
You saw event succeed event
And flower by flower and tree by tree,
Than when you'd won, releas'd from clay,
The spaceless world, the timeless day;

Ah, thro' the lifetime left to wane
  As fugitive as summer's rose
Must they who lov'd have weigh'd their pain
  Against the hope that thought bestows,
    Against the joy that memory brings
    Upon its consecrated wings?

Alas, to eyes fresh-bathed in tears
  The world a senseless vision seems
And joy a ghost with mocking fleers
  And hope a phantom bred of dreams;
    And we, long after, scarce coerce
    Like drops as dew'd the new-made hearse.

LITTLE DEAN'S YARD

OH drab old Yard, when gloomy Dis
My soul to Lethe drags
I would no other soul should miss
A footstep on your flags,
But each should hear the morrow's call
And go the morrow's way,
As one whose guest has left his hall
To come another day.

Oh grim old Yard, what recks it you,
Ringing with boyhood's pride,
That some will join the victor crew
And some go down the tide,
And some be still'd ere thews or brain
Can sound them in men's ears,
And some endure thro' sun and rain
The strokes of ninety years?

Oh grand old Yard, when I and they
Who traverse now your stones
Are gone to lay in kindred clay
These lendings of our bones,
While still you call and still you hold
Young hearts as bold as free
What matters what who went of old,
What matters what are we?

ITAQUE QUIETUS EST

1914

ERE antic Law would count him man,
He fill'd his life's appointed span
And warring 'gainst an empire's lust
Hath laid the flaxen head in dust,
Where our old foemen's friendly soil
With quiet crowns the brief-borne toil.

Ah happy lad, no doom for thee
Of palsied hand and quivering knee,
Of ashes choking lively fire
Or garlands trampled in the mire,
Nor that worst loneliness when all
Thy peers in age have heard the call.

Nor shalt thou heed if idle Fame
Forget to blaze abroad thy name,
Or but bare letters on a stone
Some dim and cold remembrance own:
Enough that from this hallow'd ark
'Twas duty sped thee to the dark.

QUOS AEQUUS AMAVIT—

NINE days he scudded o'er the lonely deep
By ruinous winds driv'n from his homeward way,
The undaunted soul that never let the mind
Slumber, nor spar'd the hand, and on the tenth
Drave on a peaceful beach, and found a folk
Plucking the careless herb and so content.
Day after day sped for them indistinct,
Deedless, with love and hate alike unknown,
An apathetic undisturbing dream.
And when upon the languor of the soul,
That never flash'd to any generous thought,
There came the touch that none may disobey,
Faintly they faded out from fruitless life,
And as they were, what time they saw the sun,
Such they remain on the sad sunless shore,
Shadows above, shadows in the under-world.
Ye did not live, ye have not perish'd so;
For that in-working and all-working power,
Which did in peace what peace desir'd, and when
Ate let loose her monsters turn'd aside
Lightly to fiercer peril, sorer toil,
And laugh'd amid the thunders, that your power—
God-like, albeit the sinew slack in death—
Fades not nor leaves the sunlight.
See the babe
Smiles in the widow's arms. Your power is his.

MONITOR OSTII[1]

THREE thousand beasts have given their hides,
Poor youngsters of the genus Bos,
To wear the stone whereon abides
Your foot, Mon. Os.

And in that hollow, slowly scoop'd,
Who cannot read of every scholar
The hope that soar'd, the fear that droop'd,
The joy, the dolour?

How Dryden, when soft Notus blew,
Yearn'd to be far from thronging men
Fishing where green the rushes grew
By Father Nen?

But Locke, whom Dryden vex'd with verse,
Declaim'd at board, declaim'd abed,
Swore every poet had a curse
Laid on his head.

There Hastings mused of Daylesford gone
By thriftless ways and furious broil,
And how the ransom could be won
And what the toil.

[1]This is a King's Scholar of the Second Election. His duty used to be to guard the doors during the day. Now he guards them only while prayers are saying.

There Themis, then our neighbour, gave
To Murray and Impey a glimpse of ermine,
Vowing them worthy great and grave
Suits to determine.

And there Charles Wesley, so they tell,
Built him a castle in the air
Far other than wherein to dwell
Became his care.

O happy daydreams, where no mist
Rising obscures the fulgent glory,
But fancies fashion as they list
The coming story.

Of no impeachment Hastings thought,
Impey of no corroding lie,
No Gordon riots Murray brought
Before his eye.

They saw not rubs, not ambusht wiles,
But those enchanting paths which make us
Merry as waves where Sermio smiles
On broad Benacus.

So Shippen with the ponderous load
Of statecraft thought his mind to please,
And Boyle, and Gower, but Cracherode
With letter'd ease.

So some beheld themselves renown'd
Among their country's dauntless fighters,
And more there were whose forethoughts crown'd
Their brows with mitres.

Nor blame we any of lighter soul
Who to the contest of to-day
For ace or bull's-eye, run or goal,
Their thoughts array:

Nor him who builds the line of six
Or puzzles out his last equation
Or strives in memory to fix
The next oration,

And likes it little that he is set
To watch alone beside the stair
What time his fellows all are met
For chant and prayer,

And struggles by a simple sum
To free himself from that subjection,
Counting the months till he become
A Third Election.

Dear boy, look not so far ahead;
Fleet, fleet enough the seasons go;
Take hour by hour the fatal thread
Of weal or woe.

Who but would give his gather'd store
Annos jam natus sexaginta
To cry in his own right once more
Your 'Instat quinta'?[1]

[1] The cry of Mon. Os. as he knocks on classroom doors at the end of afternoon school.

THE PLANE-TREE IN LITTLE DEAN'S YARD

THE footsteps on the flagstones are as light,
As shrill the voices and the eyes as bright,
As on that morning threescore years ago
When in the making of an honour'd name
Liddell from Oxford came.

Scarce older stand the towers where on ill day
Wren turn'd his genius to an alien way;
Not older, nay much younger, are or seem
Those Abbey stones that face the noonday beam
And see in Fighting Green the daisy smile
Bright as in other while.

What though 'tis held the chariot of the sun
Hath now but twenty thousand years to run?
What love of kin so quick that could extend
Feeling to who shall shivering see its end?
O'er us for all the flight of years the same
Blazes the radiant flame.

But thou, the sapling set by Liddell's spade,
Agest where others age not. Yearly fade
Thy leaves and fall, and when they come in spring
They see eld's earliest marks, the clamping ring,
The branches lopt, what else may hold thee fast
Fighting the furious blast.

And many a solid wall beneath the soil
Pens thee, and hard thy prison'd roots must toil
To raise the sap and feed the leaf. At length,
When some sad generation sees thy strength
Fail thee, no other takes thy place. Oh tree,
May I not outlive thee.

IF THERE WERE A BALL UP SCHOOL[1]

THE form-room fades before mine eyes,
Its voices die away;
I see a splendid vision rise,
The gallant and the gay.

The breathing brass thro' rafters rings
A note to charm the Nine,
And horses' tails from catgut strings
Entice the tune divine.

I see the rhythmic movement start
Before the pannell'd wall,
I feel the lifting of the heart:
How glorious is the ball.

Here manly strength and buoyant grace
The fairy footfall ply,
And gladness beams in Beauty's face
And smiles in Age's eye.

Thus oft men turn'd from grave to gay
At feast-times long ago,
Nor only they who live to-day
Place in our revels know.

[1] Westminsters use 'up' for 'in' in some connexions.

For see return from Hades' halls
A great and goodly band;
Eliza's ghost precedes the brawls
And Burghley's holds her hand.

And all the blazon'd coats come down
To breasts they dight of old,
And every crest descends to crown
Its morion's ridge of gold.

Here Hastings flaunts his ruddy manche
By Mansfield's orient star,
By Markham's lion's truncate haunch
And Harcourt's double bar.

Here Dryden's, Gibbon's, Russell's beast
Runs rampant thro' the maze,
And Pelham's birds invulne the breast,
And Pulteney's leopards gaze.

Raglan's and Richmond's kingly blend
Their passant lions' fame,
And Corbet's raven and Harley's bend
Most ancient blood proclaim.

Forgot their griefs, their quarrels all,
What Tory held or Whig,
Whose lot to rise and whose to fall,
Their souls are in the jig.

Busby himself forbears to rod
To caper round the floor,
Ben Jonson bids his Muses nod,
And Elmsley hides his lore.

A cleaner wig's on Vinny Bourne
Than e'er in life he knew,
And Anglesey resumes the corn
He lost at Waterloo.

The sternest sage with study pale
Must now perforce be merry;
Bentham and Locke each other hail
As 'Jack my boy' and 'Jerry.'

E'en Wesley, Cowper, Noel, own
The poesy of reels
And join in measures never known
To their incarnate heels.

And what a gloss of lordly furs
And what a garter'd glow,
When all our five Prime Ministers
Come capering in a row.

O shadowy forms, who join the dance
And thrid the whirling crew,
One part, alas! you note askance
That must not be for you.

I see the busy lackeys bear
The spoil of lake and lea,
What freely wing'd our English air,
What graced Sicilia's tree.

Grey shapes on gaping shells they bring
Wet with Rutupian brine,
And flounce the chicken's chilly wing
With strips of salted swine.

Ah, not for you the cresses drape
The red crustacean tail,
And not for you the sugar'd grape
Foaming breaks from its jail.

That shank may turn on tripping toes,
  That arm the waist may span,
But how should phantom lips enclose
  The meat and drink of man?

Yet welcome to your ancient hall,
  O loyal troop and true,
Against the time when others call
  And we must come with you.

So shall the flame that fires us here
  Treading the coasts of light
Some flicker keep our steps to steer
  Thro' the dim woods of night.

TO THE FOUNTAIN IN LITTLE CLOISTERS

THE poet from Venusia
With lyric rapture thrills
To see the bright Bandusia
Leap from the limestone hills.

He lauds the sweet loquacity
Wherewith its waters fall
In bubblesome vivacity
To bicker by his hall.

To incarnadine he promises
The crystal of its flood;
To shed, the morn to come, is his
A luckless victim's blood.

But you, eh? can we offer you
A porker, lamb, or kid?
We own no beast to proffer you,
Nor 'ld slay one if we did:

For to the gaze Canonical,
An omen that might be
Of passions pandemoniacal,
And war upon the sea.

Yet somehow we must gratify
  The whisper of your wave,
That modern use may ratify
  The gift that Horace gave.

Remember in your splashing, that
  In Busby's day 'twas you
Gave all the little washing that
  Our predecessors knew.

So, since not ours in mystery
  Of ritual to grope,
Accept—it marks your history—
  This cake of yellow soap.

1912

THE PIEWOMAN

'Tempora nos mutant, Anna sed Anna manet.'
From an Epigram spoken in Hall, A.D. 1737.

'Time makes no impression on a true Westminster, as Nan, the Pye Woman, and old Barker testifye.'
The Earl of Orrery to the Rev. Mr Ferrebee,
27 *November* 1738

OH Anna, Nanny, Nancy, Nan,
Whatever name you joy'd in,
How on a single pattern ran
The task you were employ'd in.

Ne'er Pistol-wise would you essay
To make the world your oyster,
But took your seat here day by day
Just underneath the cloister.

And acting like the heedful bee
No energy you squander'd,
But steady set your soul to see
The goods were up to standard.

So grandsires who their grandsons brought
At Lud's or Pack's[1] to board 'em
Again the cates of boyhood bought
And with new boyhood floor'd 'em,

[1] Ludford's and Packharness's, the names of two former Westminster boarding-houses.

THE PIEWOMAN

Turning a sympathetic eye
  Towards some bold urchin when he
Picking at sight the largest pie
  Chuckt down the twirling penny.

Hence the sweet savour of your wares
  Comes floating down the ages
When long you 've left our world of cares
  And draw Elysian wages.

And the black wave when I imbibe,
  Crossing with mouldy Charon,
I have in mind so sure a bribe
  Light-hearted I shall fare on,

Not fearing Rhadamanthine scores,
  Nor me what Styx can do to,
Can I but buy a pie of yours
  And hand a slice to Pluto.

SANCTUARY

On a pair of carrion crows established on the Abbey

THE PEREGRINE builds on the lonely scar
High over the glittering wave;
With a swoop he descends on his prey from afar
And his maw is the Moorfowl's grave,
'But oh, but oh,' says our Carrion Crow,
'A much better home than the crags I know.'

The keeper he marks where the Peregrines rest
And he crawls through the heather and brake,
And the bird soars up from the ledge of his nest
But to fall as a stone to the lake:
'Oh ho, oh ho,' says our Carrion Crow,
'Not a shot comes here from the streets below.'

And only young pigeons, in Cloisters afeard
Of a claw on the callow noule,
Blame Peter who prompted and Simon who rear'd
High roofs for the wilding fowl:
'For oh, for oh,' says our Carrion Crow,
'No home in the world like the Abbey I know.'

TRANSLATION

'NOTICE: The potato-man by the Crimea Monument
is out of bounds.'

IDEM LATINE

Poma effossa arvis est qui prope nostra tropaea
Vendit: eo puero non licet ire: cave.

A COMMENT

From the Under School

FOR such poor wares I hunger'd not
While I might freely buy
Potatoes, coffee, chestnuts hot,
And miscellany pie;
But now to that forbidden spot
I turn a longing eye,
Half bent on clearing at a shot
His evening's whole supply.

Six years ago a nurse I had
Of temper meek and mild;
I us'd to try—'twas very bad—
To make her wild as wild.
She'd cry, when thus I'd driv'n her mad
By crime on crime up-piled,
'You show, you do, you naughty lad,
That Shall is Mustn't's child.'

IN THE METRE OF AN OLD DIRGE

HOW do the trains come to you
And coming how are they stopp'd,
O Kensington High Street
And O Gloster Road?

They come by electricity
Fed from a rail below,
O Kensington High Street
And O Gloster Road.

They are stopp'd by cutting the force off
And putting a clamp on the wheel,
O Kensington High Street
And O Gloster Road.

And if the force persisted
And if the clamp wouldn't hold,
O Kensington High Street
And O Gloster Road,

They would go on for ever
On the Inner Circle sped
By you, sad Kensington High Street,
By you, drear Gloster Road.

[The word 'O' must be stressed, making in the third line of the stanza a monosyllabic foot.]

FOR A MUSICIAN

NARBY and Carby and Babbyn and Wragge
All went a-wooing to Marjorie Mag,
Marjorie Mag, Marjorie Mag,
All went a-wooing to Marjorie Mag.

Narby he offer'd her acres wide,
Field and forest and houses beside,
Acres wide, acres wide,
Field and forest and houses beside.

Carby he offer'd her golden store,
Half of a million pounds and more,
Golden store, golden store,
Half of a million pounds and more.

Babbyn he offer'd her rank and fame,
Bab is a viscount and proud of his name,
Rank and fame, rank and fame,
Bab is a viscount and proud of his name.

Wragge he could offer her nothing at all,
Strangers ruled in his father's hall,
Nothing at all, nothing at all,
Strangers ruled in his father's hall.

Land, says Mag, it is dirty and wet,
And landlords, I fear, they are ever in debt,
  Ever in debt, ever in debt,
Landlords, I fear, they are ever in debt.

Gold, says Mag, it is nothing but care,
And yaller's a colour I cannot abear,
  Cannot abear, cannot abear,
Yallow's a colour I cannot abear.

And for a coronet, oh dear me,
That's nowadays nothing but fiddledeedee,
  Fiddledeedee, fiddledeedee,
Nowadays nothing but fiddledeedee.

So, if it please you, dear penniless Wragge,
'Tis you I will marry, says Marjorie Mag,
  Marjorie Mag, Marjorie Mag,
You I will marry, says Marjorie Mag.

FROM CALLIMACHUS

NEWS came, my Heracleitus, you were dead,
And tears the telling made me shed,
So many a time we twain had seen the sun
Set ere our talk was done.
But now, my Halicarnassian friend, I know
You have been ashes long ago,
Yet still your song-birds live, whereon for aye
Death, who grips all, no hand shall lay.

The author of 'Ionica' expanded the lines of Callimachus into a fine poem. The present is a more direct version.

FROM THE GREEK

BACK by themselves at eve through driving snow
The cattle from the hill came to the byre,
But, ah, the neatherd sleeps for evermo
Lull'd near an oak-tree by the lightning fire.

AFTER HORACE

WHAT is goodness, good Sir Gilbert?
Will it stay the speeding year?
Brows will wrinkle, heads will grizzle,
And the date of death is near.

What can prayer avail against him?
What the purse-string open'd wide?
All the good and all the valiant,
All the beautiful have died.

Vain to loiter in St James's
When the war-trump sounds through Ind,
Vain to flee when influenza
Rides the pestilential wind.

Land and home perforce must miss you,
Wife's devotion cannot save;
Trim your grass and prune your roses,
They will blossom on your grave.

Find the key that locks your cellar;
Court your friend before your heir;
Drink with me the ninety-seven,
Leave him for himself to care.

AFTER HORACE

UNDUE depression and elation
Avoid, De Vere, for die you must
Whether you shun all recreation
Or for delights have timely gust.

What of a picnic by the trees
Beside the busy bickering brook,
A quart of Bass, a Stilton cheese,
Before we sign in Pluto's book?

Is gold of Ophir in the scrip
And blood of Clarence in the veins,
Or is one but the beggar slip
To shudder in the frosty rains?

No odds, the bourne is one for all,
None passes life's allotted span,
None but must hear the imperious call
And soon or late endure the ban.

MR PODGER COMES TO THE PLAY

I WAS ask'd t'other day to the Westminster Play,
A thing I had heard of but never been at,
By Tommy my nephew, that impudent brat,
As deep as a crater, as quick as a gnat,
Who has plagued all my life since he gave up his bib;
And when I declar'd that though once I was glib—
Minerva and Phœbus forgive me the fib—
No longer I'm pat in that difficult Latin,
'Poor uncle,' says he, 'I will get you a crib.'
Then his father breaks in, 'Oh, you mustn't refuse
To encourage a sprouting and promising Muse'—
For an urchin like that what a title to choose!
But the way that the pair have been spoiling their lad
Ever since in the scholar's black gown he was clad,
Though of course when he got it I said I was glad,
Makes a bachelor uncle exceedingly mad.
'But, Tommy, you know that my dinner's at eight,
For these twenty years past an unchangeable date,
For I can't eat it early and starve if it's late;
I must rush it at seven or wait till eleven,
And that, you'll admit, is a very sad fate

For a middle-aged man with a rational plan
Of arranging his life's unexpandible span
Above all things in matters concerning the plate
And the glass which the wise make its regular mate.'
Still all wouldn't do, I must see the thing through,
'Though you'll sleep,' says Mamma, 'while the
youngsters orate.'

So to humour the cub I dropp'd dinner and rub;
At a quarter-to-eight I got up in my club
And but half fill'd with snacks I said 'Call me a taxi'
In the temper one's in when deprived of one's grub.
Then I drove to Dean's Yard and got out by an arch
Where the draught made me think we were plunged
into March;
To describe it I've no pen nor how through the open
Of Little Dean's Yard many yards I must paddle,
As poor an arrival as vex'd Mrs Raddle
When with Cluppin's her sister she foolishly miss'd her
Right spot to get out for her friend Mrs Bardell's
And her chidings made Raddle think life was all fardles.
So over the pavement I painfully tread it
To a building of Christopher Wren's, as I've read it,
Though a knavish Lord Burlington pilfer'd the credit.

But I wonder what made good Sir Christopher plan his
stairs
With the stoniest steps and the ironiest bannisters;
Their look seem'd to fill all my being with chill
And I said to myself 'I am going to be ill,'
For I knew from the tune my extremes began sing me
One pod- and the other chir-agra would bring me.
Still I got to the top and then enter'd the dormit'ry,
And in vain by regarding the beds to get warm I try;
And I'm glad I don't lie in those cubicle rows,
For it surely must break e'en a school-boy's repose
If but one of the number produce in his slumber
The vigilant notes of a nightingale nose.
So I'm taken to sit, as they say, in the pit;
Dress-circle the site more exactly would hit.
Then the Conquering Hero was play'd by the band,
Though who'd beaten whom I did not understand,
But a crowd of old gentlemen came and took places
Where the calves of the actors are flush with their faces.
Then a scholar appears as the curtain divides,
And he bows to the front and he bows to the sides,
And he looks very well in that garb of his, which is
A coat of the court with appropriate breeches,

A very nice dress for a lad in his 'teens.
He's the prologue to speak, which to me is all Greek,
But I clap with the rest as is right in a guest,
For you've got to make out you make out what he means.
Of the Play that then follow'd I'd read the translation,
Though there's one thing, I own, that my wit's a bit beats,
And that's why the action all falls in the streets,
And so there are times when the comedy's comical,
As a critical personage next me opin'd,
Not quite in the way that the author design'd,
But the reason for this was, he thought, economical,
Since, grant that at Athens the action all lay,
One scene would suffice then, whatever the play.
It seems a young man, whose Papa was away
On a mining concession that promis'd to pay—
The old file was a Croesus but still on that lay—
Fell in love with a maiden whose purse wasn't laden
With enough to provide her from day unto day,
And he vow'd he'd be faithful for ever and aye;
But foreseeing a row, if to wife he should take her,
And forbidden by honour and love to forsake her,
He finds a young fellow who lives by his wits,
One Phormio, telling him where the wind sits;

For these thick young Athenians, so 'twould appear,
Unhelp'd couldn't get the right sow by the ear,
And always must crave for the aid of a slave
Or somebody like one their fathers to brave.
So Phormio takes on the labour with glee;
'As sure now as lying is easy,' says he,
'My worthy young gentleman, leave it to me,
And your daddy shall lump what's a fait accompli.
Miss Phanium's parents, you say, are in Hades:
Now our statutes provide for such desolate ladies:
The nearest of kin of the bachelor kind
By Athenian law must make her his squaw,
Or such sum as another will take her with find.
Very well then, Miss Phanium puts you in court,
I go into the box, and 'twill make me rare sport
To recite a long pedigree proving that you
As third cousin, y-gad, to her worthy old dad
Are the party whose foot must go into this shoe.
And as for your father I don't care a jot;
On a hawk or a kite who wastes powder and shot?'—
What? They hadn't these things? Oh, a trivial blot.—
'But as it's for you I'm so perjur'd a sinner,
Don't forget me whenever you ask men to dinner.'

So Papa, when his mine had been duly espied,
Came back in a fury to find that the jury
Had saddled his son with a penniless bride.
And he lik'd it the less on account of a mess
Whence he hop'd he could rescue his naughty old brother
Who'd in Athens a wife and in Lemnos another,
With a son by the one and a daughter by t'other,
And who meant that his nephew should marry the lass:
As the child of a friend she might very well pass
Now lying defunct beneath the Lemnian grass.
Other matches he'd shun that his wife number one,
A vixen possess'd of a rancorous bark,
With the rest of the world might be kept in the dark:
His brother's connivance at this his contrivance
Would keep his black secret as safe as an ark.
So, just when his brother went after the gold,
He cross'd the blue water to fetch home his daughter,
But found, when he got there, the ladies were not there,
In fact it's to Athens they're gone, he is told.
This gave the old boy such a deuce of a fright
That he took to his bed on that very same night,
And a whole month of physicking scarce put him right.

In his absence his son, who thereby had his run,
As he never before had, what does he, the knave,
But get his heart hit by a good-looking chit,
A fiddler by calling, by station a slave,
And would buy and would marry the girl slap-a-dash,
But his father, wise man, hadn't left him the cash?
A friend of his promis'd to send round the hat,
But this would take two or three days perhaps, and that
Her owner averr'd was too long a delay
With a customer waiting and ready to pay.
So seeing how great the poor lover's alarm is
Our bridegroom steps in like a man vi et armis:
He's delighted, he says, to give cousinly aid,
So he batters the owner and sweeps off the maid,
Though some time, he owns it, the wretch must be paid.
And that's how it stands when our bigamist lands
To find that his nephew has slipped through his hands.
Then the pair of old boys set their noddles to work;
This marriage they still perhaps may manage to burke.
But their very desire to make Phanium prance
Gives Phormio's wits yet another good chance
Of playing his fiddle and making them dance.
The price of the maid must be rais'd and be paid,

And in that affair too he'd been ask'd for his aid,
And now how to give it he saw at a glance.
If the bridegroom's old father would open his purse,
He'd undo what he'd done and withdraw from the son
The wife he had taken for better, for worse,
And wed her himself for the sake of the pelf;
So he told him but meant, when they'd sent round the hat
And got up the sum, to repay it from that
And invent an excuse to get loose from the noose:
What, marry? Not he: they might go to the deuce.
So the brothers, though he who's less interested squirms,
For the sake of the other agree to his terms.
'Make haste, oh make haste,' the poor frighten'd one cries,
So off to a lawyer's papa-in-law hies,
And when Phormio gives him a proper receipt,
And can't, it should seem, from his bargain retreat,
Down he pays him the cash with a curse or two in
And a pious desire he may die in his sin.
So one brother departs, and the other one starts
To consider his guest for his Lemnian kin;
But, while he is pondering how to begin,
From his brother's own house comes an elderly dame,
And he cries, 'Oh my eyes, if this ain't a surprise;

My child had a nurse and that nurse is this same.
What's she done with the pair that I left in her care,
The mother and daughter, and what does she there?'
Then he finds (and not minds) that the mother is dead,
And, oh wonder, oh marvel, oh blessing god-sped,
This daughter's the girl that his nephew has wed.
Then he hurried to gather his child in his arms,
Broke in on the bride, and 'Thank heaven,' he cried,
'There's an end, oh my own, to my constant alarms;
What delight and what rapture, my child, thee to see
whole!
And you've chosen the swain that can finish my pain;
How flawless my joy, and how truly my glee whole!'
To make secrecy sure he had shut to the door,
But this silly old thing never thought of the keyhole;
And a slave going by thought he might as well try
To discover the cause of that rapturous cry,
And he listen'd so well to the words as they fell
That he got the whole story, and so he felt sure he
Could land the old boys in a regular sell
By imparting to Phormio all that he'd heard
And then leaving the rest to that wily young bird.

Now back from the lawyer's our paymaster toddles,
And his brother makes clear what delights him to hear,
And again the old boys put together their noddles.
By hook or by crook they're determin'd to seize on
The coin they've disburs'd, as it proves, without reason,
So they send for our friend, who's transferr'd it by this
To the fiddle-girl's owner and pos'd as the donor
To the other young spark of the source of his bliss,
And now that he knows what was under the rose,
If they press him, he tells them, the facts he'll disclose.
'What, pay back the cash, my good sirs? Tilly-vally!
You're a pretty old pair to go thus shilly-shally.
If you've chang'd your design, what affair that of mine?
I said I would wed and I'm willing to do it,
And through thin and through thick to the money I stick
To use as I choose, whether hoard it or blue it.'
They would hale him to court but he raises a shout,
While they struggle to drag him away and to gag him,
'Nausistrata,—sistrata,—sistrat, come out!'
And when to his calling the lady appears,
He pours the dark tale in her passionate ears.
As you'd guess she behaves, and she stamps and she raves,
While the brotherly brother insistently craves

That she won't be so hard on her husband but pardon
His sin, now that wife number two is the grave's.
But, before she's consented, in Phormio breaks—
To make sure of her favour this method he takes—
Saying how in the cause of her amorous son
Out of such and such moneys her husband he's done.
'Quite right too,' says she, 'let the lad have his run;
If his father had two wives, sure he may have one;
And as to forgiveness 'tis he shall decide.
Go away, you old wretch, and bring bridegroom and bride.
But to you, my young sir, I'm oblig'd for your pains;
Any work for my son my approval obtains.'
'Will you ask me to dinner, ma'am?' 'Surely,' says she;
'Our mahogany hides no more welcome a knee.'

So now at the end of these stirring affairs
The young lovers, we hope, will be two happy pairs,
But the man of two wives, through the shock he survives,
When his helpmate is by scarce will venture to speak,
While our valiant adventurer well may grow sleek,
For he's sure of a dinner now twice in the week.

OWHY do you worry us, worry us, worry us,
Bells of —— ——'s?
Is it out of the world you are eager to hurry us,
Bells of —— ——'s?
O would that I were
Or the streets of Stamboul or the coveted Fez in,
Where the minaret shelters the gentle muezzin,
As he calls with good reason In apposite season
The people to fall to their reverent knees on
Their carpets for prayer,
And there's none of your swinging And meaningless
ringing
And merciless ear-cracking dingadongdinging,
O bells of —— ——'s?

There was once on a time a distinguish'd Professor,
His chair never held such a learned possessor,
For though in his day there was no Athenæum,
By his reading he knew quite as well as they do
Where the Bishops collect by thy Place, Waterloo—
The poetical turn to their Lordships is due—
The martyrs who died in the red Coliseum,
And those who before became torches for Nero;

And there upon Isis, where Lilliburlero
Was voted a libel, they dubb'd him the hero,
Because, as contráry To William and Mary,
And doggedly stubbornly Jacobite, ne'er he
The oath of allegiance could bring him to say,
And he held up to scorn, as the wickedest born,
Since Arius went his heretical way,
That swearing Erastian vicar of Bray.

Now he held certain views upon backbones and devils,
How the tail'd ones when tired of Satanical revels
Will fly up away from the home of their clan
And cramp themselves close in the spine of a man,
Of a fat one for choice, but if not where they can,
And to make themselves room in a confine so narrow—
I must state what is said, though your feelings it harrow—
They widen the passage by eating his marrow;
But the sound of a bell in the chime or the knell
Will draw them all forth helter-skelter pell-mell;
And the reason no doubt Why they thus hurry out
(Though this is a view the Professor would scout),
Is they know there's an easy-got prey thereabout,
For in lieu of the victim they nibble and gnaw,

They're entitled to lay an acquisitive claw
On the men whose resounding thus makes them with-
draw,
And a ringer or two will very well do,
Though it cannot be said that the offering's new,
Caught up by this honest industrious crew,
To present to the person they speak of as Plu.
These views the dear Doctor suppos'd would refresh us,
And to keep to himself too he thought them too precious,
So he printed and publish'd a pamphlet affirming 'em
On the word of a gentleman living near Birmingham,
Whom the leeches avow'd to be deep in decline,
Or chronic arthritis, Or perhaps meningitis,
Till they saw a black troop coming out of his spine
As the bells began ringing for worship divine.

Now there well might arise in the county of Warwick
A host of such creatures with odours phosphoric,
(What? sulphurous? Perhaps, but my pen is inimical—
This turn of its nib for myself a mere whim I call—
To distinguishing properly anything chymical,
And though much obliged that to rights you would set
me,
I can't make the change, for the rhyme will not let me);

I say up to Brum They might very well come,
But no demon of sense near the Abbey can show himself.
Once an old one it's true, who of course dare not go
himself,
Drest a little one up, a mere devilish pup,
In such a disguise as he took it would hide him;
And rising to light near the underground station—
There's a smell to this day there which marks the
location—
And walking as far as the Broadway beside him,
With the strictest injunctions he carefully plied him,
And a wrap or two more for more safety he lent him,
And by Tuttle Street on to the Sanctuary sent him;
But the sight of the towers made his boots drop away
And out came the hoofs that his nature bewray,
And screaming he fled from the presence of day
With such cruciant pain in his infant inside
That to see him so suffer a Spaniard had cried.
And reporting his fate To the fiend at the gate
He rais'd such a row in the regions of At—
(e follows, of course, though a little bit late),
That Lethe awoke in her sluggardly bed
To inquire who was painting her provinces red:

Like the hullabaloo out in Germany, when a
French agency father'd on Mr McKenna
Just the opposite words to the words that he said.
Not a fiend from that day Has e'er wander'd this way,
And as for ourselves, all the demons and elves
In town or in country, by land or by sea,
Are powerless to touch us wherever we be.
If you note them approaching by sixes or twelves
Or fifties or hundreds—any number, there's none
dreads—
Say 'Westminster boy' and their onset it shelves.
Yes, if by mistake ever any come *arter* us,
Back he turns at the word and runs headlong to Tartarus,
And to fill to the full his dire agony's cup
Never more, never more is 'allow'd to go up.'

Now it follows from this that, while bells may become
a gem,
Of quite other sort Than the men there export,
In the eyes and the ears of the people of Brummagem,
For indeed to recline on a populate spine
Is like lying on harrows upturn'd to the skyne—
These obsolete forms are for verses like mine—

And thus to restore anatomical use
May afford to the ringers a reason'd excuse,
Still that doesn't apply to the land hereabout,
These precincts of ours, Where demoniac powers
Cannot enter the backbone to rummage and rout,
For to cure a whole man Is a quack-doctor's plan,
And what never was in cannot well be got out.
So why you ring here now becomes very clear;
But believe me, good sirs, it's not playing the game,
And on Phlegethon banks they are saying the same,
And surely they make no iniquitous claim,
That you shouldn't beguile 'em By right of asylum
But each answer the charges that stand to his name.
Be off where they can, if they've right, throw a net at you;
It is shabby to ring where you know they can't get at you.

1912

LATIN GALLIAMBICS

Translation from Robin Grey

UT oves ovile in artum, sua ut in stabula boves,
ut amabilem in quietem rediit genus hominum,
lugentis irrigantur mea lumina lacrimis,
simul ac viri iacentis sopor incubat oculis.

Sibi coniugem petebat me fidus Erasius,
pueri sed in crumena modo nummulus inerat,
quo plusculum ad parandum mare navita petiit,
nisi ut inde me bearet cupiens nihil aliud.

Ubi vix novaverat sol sua lumina deciens,
casu pater lacerti sibi rupit os habile,
et nostra fraude furum vacca unica periit,
materque tacta morbo est, et amor meus aberat,
vetulusque ventitabat procus, heu, mihi, Lycidas.
Neque nere fila mater, neque opus facere pater,
neque quod necesse victus ego quaerere poteram,
etsi lucerna fessae nunquam otia tetulit,
sed utrumque tunc alebat lacrimansque ita Lycidas,
'Miserere,' ait, 'parentum; mihi nube ita miserans.'
Animus meus refugit reducem fore Erasium
sperans, sed excitata est violentia Boreae,
et naufragum dederunt trucia freta puerum:
utinam ipse tum perisset, ratis acri ubi pelago,
aut quid ego maesta vivo, confecta miseriis?

Querula pater premebat, genitrix prece tacita
sed ut intuens dolorem summum mihi faceret:
tum me viro dederunt nautae, hei mihi, memorem,
puero, hei mihi, ut fidelem: sic nupta ego vetulo.
Modo triciens novarat sibi sol ubi radios,
ego maesta cum sederem prope limina tuguri,
oblata tum mei umbra est, ita visa mihi, Erasi
oculis, adesse enim ipsum mihi credere nequii,
'Redii,' sed ille clamat; 'praesto est tibi thalamus.'
Ibi quam diu loquentes mala fata gemuimus:
semel osculata iussi valedicere puerum,
cupioque deinde mortem, sed surda mors preci est:
mene ita dolere, mene his natam esse miseriis.
Nunc sicut umbra versor, lanaeque me piget:
animo absit id nefandum cupidus sit ut Erasi,
uxoriumque munus pia nitar ut obeam,
mihi nam senex maritus studet esse benevolus.

JOHN SARGEAUNT.

PRINTED AT
THE SHAKESPEARE HEAD PRESS
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Santa Barbara

THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW.

Series 9482

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACI
A A 001 432 078

3 1205 02114 7192